

# The Old Pioneer Trail 1847



"Far in the west there lies a desert land where the mountains lift, through perpetual snows, their lofty and luminous summits  
Down from their jagged, deep ravines, where the gorge, like a gateway,  
Opens a passage rude to the wheels of the emigrant's wagon."

On the 23rd day of July, in this year, 1910, I climbed a piece of mountain road. The mountain was steep, the road was edged with choke-cherry trees and clumps of ancient scrub-oak. The road was now unused; what once had been ruts made by the wheels of wagons, were changed, by rain and flood, into deep-cut gullies. It was a place where, in the springtime, the air is fragrant with the exhalations from millions of snow-white blossoms, and where now on the branches of the choke-cherry trees, clusters of crimson wild fruit hung.

This place is now historic. The piece of road was that over "The Little Mountain," below lay Emigration Canyon, and beyond was the "First Glimpse of the Valley." Down that piece of road had passed, sixty-three years before, the pioneers of 1847.

At the road's steepest part, near "The Summit," and where it is crossed by ledges of stone, littered with boulders and shale, that once tore the iron from the cattle's feet, I found an ox-shoe. The relic had lain there long. Perhaps since the passing of that first company of pioneers. It was much worn, it had done good service. At least that shoe might have pressed the soil, the sands, the rocks, of many wearisome miles of road; no doubt, the width of the (then) wilderness that lay between the waters of the Missouri river and the spot where it had remained undisturbed so long.

Blue arched the sky over "The Little Mountain," there was stillness around. I tried to dream the passing of the pioneers on that historic day. I tried to dream how they appeared. I tried to realize how they repeated a silent prayer of thankfulness in their hearts if they uttered not a hymn of praise aloud. This I tried to do. I tried to see in the mind's eye the travel-worn men and women. I tried to realize how they rejoiced after the hardships passed, and looked forward, if with care yet with hope, to the future. Yes, this was my dream, and then, six hours later, I was in the streets of the city that they had built. I looked at the crowds of people and at the structures; walked in the brilliant light of the lamps and stood by the monument to the pioneers.

How rapidly we have grown! What were once the dreams of the future, first changed to reality, and then sank away until they are now but dreams of the past! The descendants of the pioneers can hardly imagine the days when the long train of dust-covered wagons drawn by the slow and patient oxen, or the day when the Pony Express, or the lumbering stage-coach, brought the quickest word, or formed the fastest transport between the Inter-mountain region and "The States." It is hard to understand now, to picture this country when it was practically a howling wilderness, inhabited by bands of savage Indians, and penetrated only by intrepid trappers or hunters. As we are now whirled along over the Laramie plains on through the Echo and Weber canyons, or through the Castle Gate, or across the Sierra Nevada, or the Humboldt desert, reclining on luxuriously cushioned seats and but a few hours away from the eastern or western seaboard we may well remember to do justice to the achievements of the intrepid pioneers.

That piece of mountain road brought me endless thought. The long, long plodding of the journey came back again. Incidents of many kinds thrust their memories upon me. Sometimes the experiences recalled were pleasurable, sometimes they were sad. But mirthful or tragic, pathetic or humorous, I went over them again. The twelve hundred miles, nay, the nearer fifteen hundred, considering the circuitous route which the train in which we accomplished the journey was compelled to follow, passed before me like a moving panorama. Prairies, hills, streams, mountains, canyons, followed each other in quick succession—all the ever-changing prospect between the banks of the Missouri river and the Valley of the Inland Sea.

Scott's Bluffs, Chimney Rock, Ash Hollow, Independence Rock, the Devil's Gate, the South Pass—what thoughts these names bring back to the pioneers. What a delight it was to one city-bred to mingle in the freedom of camp life, such as we sometimes enjoyed. And what an experience it was when one was on night guard. The picket on duty at the front in war was scarcely more important, than he who then kept the watch at night. On the faithful performance of the night guard's duty, our safety depended. Men who now count their wealth by hundreds of thousands, some by millions of dollars, can remember their vain strivings when on night duty to see a glimpse of what fortune held in store for them in the "Westward Ho!"

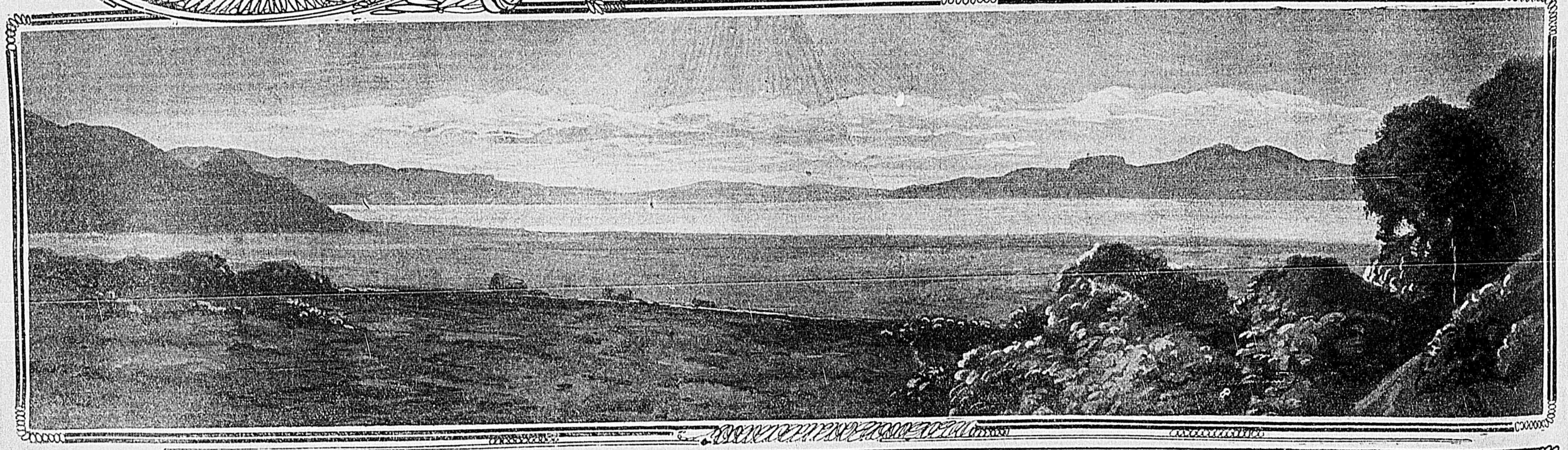
Ruskin spoke true, to his dictum there is no denial. We have many wild roads in Utah, but that one over "The Little Mountain" is the one of the greatest interest. It speaks eloquently of the will, of the faith of man. It is a link, as it were, between the past and the future. Now we behold a land giving a promise of future greatness, where peace, wealth and happiness shall go hand in hand, and where the youth of today may learn a lesson from the heroism of its pioneer fathers.

Along the course of the Platte river; over the Black Hills; through the lands of the buffalo, the rattlesnake and the bear; lighting their camp-fires by the Sweetwater, and on the crests of the Rocky Mountains; privations here, privations there, but, at last, the view of the Wasatch, "The Valley" below their feet, danger and fatigues forgotten, the stubborn, interminable miles conquered, "The Journey" of the pioneers was at an end.

ALFRED LAMBOURNE.

Emigration Canyon

First Glimpse of The Valley



First Glimpse of The Valley  
Solitude